CHAPTER XXXVI

THE ES SALT RAID—*continued*

MEANWHILE the infantry had, early in the morning of May 1st, renewed the assault on the Turkish stronghold at Shunet Nimrin. After a preliminary bombardment of seventy-five minutes, the Londoners again made heroic attempts to climb the heights, but were everywhere cut down and repulsed, mainly by machine-gun fire. In view of the situation at Damieh, orders for a renewed attack later in the day were cancelled; Shea's force was weakened by the withdrawal of a mounted regiment on the left and by the loss of the Leicester Battery—both sent to join Chaytor's command. Nor was it only at Shunet Nimrin that the overthrow of the 4th Light Horse Brigade at Damieh was to have immediate and crippling consequences. While large Turkish forces pressed down the valley towards the Shert track, another body marched up the path towards Es Salt, and by nightfall the situation there was becoming serious.

Shortly before dawn on May 1st the 5th Mounted Brigade, under General Kelly, advanced to attack Es Salt; for both the brigade commander and the headquarters of Australian Mounted Division were still ignorant that it had been captured nearly twelve hours before by Wilson's light horsemen. When the yeomanry screen came upon the Australians there was a spirited exchange of good-humoured chaffing. Ryrie with the 2nd Light Horse Brigade reached the town soon afterwards, and was ordered at once to press on to the capture of Hill 2900 in co-operation with the two squadrons of the 10th under Olden. At the same time Hodgson pushed the yeomanry down the main road to Shunet Nimrin, to make a vigorous attack upon the rear of the force which was holding up the Londoners; Cox, with the 1st Brigade, was ordered to take up a line along the Umm esh Shert-Es Salt track, to cut off the escape of the Shunet Nimrin Turks towards the north. Hill 2900 was found to be evacuated, so that Ryrie was favourably placed for closing the road leading from Shunet Nimrin through Ain es Sir to the Amman road. At midday Hodgson was still without information of the break-through

at Damieh, and believed the trap set for the enemy to be complete.

Early in the afternoon Wilson, who, having been asked to support Ryrie towards Hill 2900, had sent out the 8th Regiment and four machine-guns, had only two troops of the 10th Regiment (about forty men) in reserve. At that time Es Salt was unguarded from the west. Then came the news of the disaster at Damieh, and the information that the enemy was advancing in strength by the track leading up to the town on Gilead. On the instant all Hodgson's plans collapsed. The two troops of Western Australians in reserve were rushed out along the Damieh track. Ryrie and the troops supporting him were ordered to abandon Hill 2900 at once, and withdraw upon Es Salt—which was done, two squadrons of the 3rd Brigade being left on the Amman road about four miles out. Ryrie was then ordered to take part in the rear attack upon Shunet Nimrin, co-operating with the yeomanry who, advancing down the road—a steep, narrow, and intricate highway cut round the sides of precipitous hills above the wild gorge of the Wady Shaib—had been held up before they got half-way at a bridge at El Howeij. After a conference between Ryrie and Kelly, it was decided that the yeomanry should endeavour to seize the commanding high ground on the east and cover the advance of Ryrie's regiments down the road. Hodgson's order was "the road must be opened to-day." Cox, with the 1st Brigade, was to co-operate on the right of the 2nd by a vigorous thrust towards el Haud. But in consequence of the disaster at Damieh, Cox's main strength was now needed to ensure that the Shert track in the hills was not molested, and he could display only slight activity towards Shunet Nimrin. Nowhere, however, could progress be made in the face of the enemy's fire and the extremely rough country, and by nightfall the attack had not developed. At about 8 p.m., Bourne, who was in the hills on the right of the 4th Brigade, sent Lieutenant W. K. King[1] with twenty men to raid some troublesome enemy posts on his front. King's party killed five Turks, and captured a few prisoners and a machine-gun.

[1] Lieut. W K King, M C. 2nd L H. Regt. Grazier; of Hughenden, Q'land; b. Longreach, Q'land, 6 Apr, 1896. Killed in action, 14 July, 1918.

During the night two squadrons of the 10th Light Horse Regiment took up a position guarding Es Salt from attack by the road from Damieh; Scott with the 9th carried the line round the north of the town, where he occupied the height Kefr Hudr; the 8th Regiment and one squadron of the 10th were astride the Amman road to the east. The position was now decidedly a defensive one. The Turks, with their strong force at Shunet Nimrin unshaken, and served by the track to Ain es Sir—pressing hardly also against Es Salt and against Chaytor down on the plain—were admirably placed for the offensive. They had to win very little ground, and that lightly held, in order to isolate the four mounted brigades in the hills. But Chauvel had not yet lost hope. On the night of the 1st he ordered Shea to renew the assault at Shunet Nimrin, and Hodgson was directed to push with every available man down the main road from Es Salt.

The Londoners resumed their heartbreaking task at 2 a.m. on the 2nd. In the first rush they occupied the enemy's advanced sangars, but were then again beaten off. The fight raged bitterly for some hours, but, although slight gains were made—notably by the Patialas of Tooth's Detachment on the left flank—the assault at no time gave promise of success. Early in the afternoon the 180th Brigade of the 60th was ordered down from Bethany in motor-lorries to join in the attack. Meanwhile the yeomanry and Ryrie's men had made little or no progress in their advance along the Es Salt road. The track was firmly held against them, and the hills on either side were so rugged and precipitous that outflanking was almost impossible even for dismounted horsemen. Moreover, the left flank of the brigades was open to the enemy towards the east. At 10.30 a.m. the 5th Mounted Brigade was fighting on a narrow front for the Howeij bridge, but Ryrie's regiments were not yet in action.

The whole position of the mounted brigades was now complicated, and becoming each hour more dangerous. While the 2nd Brigade and the yeomanry were moving on Shunet Nimrin, enemy forces from both Amman and Damieh were closing on their rear around Es Salt. During the night Wilson's long and lightly-held line round the town had been closely pressed. Todd, with part of the 10th Regiment on a

ridge about two miles from the town, covering the track from Damieh, was hotly attacked in the dark. An advanced post held by one troop, about a mile west of the ridge, was almost surrounded by a strong enemy party and had to be withdrawn; Wilson sent a squadron of the 8th under Major Crawford, with two machine-guns, to reinforce Todd's line. The menace from Amman then developed, and Hodgson was obliged to withdraw the 7th Light Horse Regiment from the advance towards Shunet Nimrin, and place it on a line covering Es Salt-El Awab south-east of the town. Across the Amman road two squadrons of the 8th Regiment were in position with four machine-guns and two guns of the Hong Kong and Singapore Battery, while a squadron of the 10th Regiment with four machine-guns under Major H. B. Hamlin[2] carried the line round towards Scott on the north.

During the afternoon Turks were seen gathering in front of Todd's position. Keeping the light horsemen under harassing gun-fire, the enemy infantry crept up the rocky slope until in places they were within a hundred yards of part of the line. Anticipating an assault, the light horsemen worked hard to improve their little stone sangars, and pack-horses were employed to carry out loads of stick-bombs, which had been found in the enemy dump at Es Salt. At about 8 p.m., when the darkness was intensified by a heavy mist, the Turks attempted to rush the position. Their charge carried them to within twenty yards of the Australian line on the right and within 200 yards on the left; then they were stopped by Hotchkiss and rifle fire. Invisible as the enemy was, the Australians had a good sense of the ground, and the Turks were shot down in large numbers. After a brief pause the attempt was repeated, but again the riflemen on the crest beat them off. At 2 a.m. on the 3rd a further determined endeavour was made to shift the Australians. This time the Turks came within easy bombing distance, but could not live against the cool sure work of the defenders. For two hours, however, they hung on to their ground, and at 4 o'clock made their last rush. Dawn was now close, and the Western Australians and Victorians, fighting with complete confidence, although all night

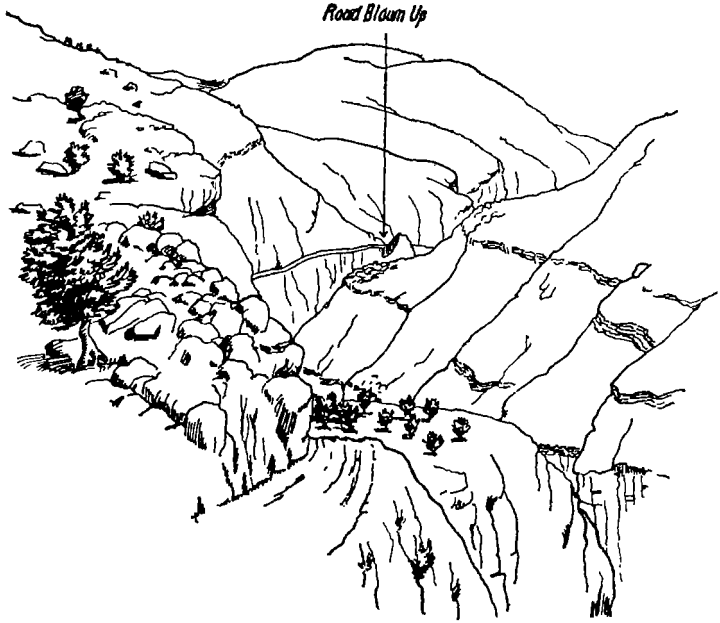
[2] Maj. H B. Hamlin, D S O. 10th L H. Regt Surveyor; of Narrogin, W. Aust.; b. Panmure, Auckland, N.Z.; 14 Sept., 1885. Died of illness, 30 May, 1919.

they had been many times outnumbered, cut down the assault before it developed, and then, leaping from their cover, swept the enemy from the ridge with bombs and bayonet. The Turks retired about 1,000 yards, and did not again approach the position. Daylight showed 150 enemy dead close to the sangars; the enemy's casualties probably exceeded 1,000, while the light horse losses were nominal.

About noon on the 2nd Ryrie and Kelly advised Hodgson that the country between them and Shunet Nimrin "was so difficult that they could not hope to reach their objectives much before dark"; they recommended that the attack should be stopped. Hodgson ordered them to continue. A few minutes later Ryrie and Kelly repeated their recommendation, and pointed out that their left flank was in danger from an enemy attack from the east. Hodgson again ordered them forward, but soon afterwards, learning that the enemy was showing up strongly along the Amman road, proposed to Chauvel that the two brigades should be withdrawn for the defence of Es Salt. But this meant the abandonment of the whole operation, and, dark as the outlook was, Chauvel was not yet disposed to accept a total failure. He therefore advised Hodgson that the two brigades should push on for Shunet Nimrin. But the facts could not be evaded, and a little later Chauvel agreed to the withdrawal of the 5th Regiment from Ryrie's brigade to meet the threat from the direction of Amman. This, in effect, reduced the four brigades upon Gilead to the defensive, as Kelly's brigade and the 6th Light Horse Regiment had no chance of success down the road to Shunet Nimrin. Kelly's position, in fact, soon became serious. His attack on the El Howeij bridge had produced no effect upon the enemy; his regiments had suffered many casualties; and the Turks soon afterwards menaced his rear by a strong cavalry advance down the Wady Saidun from the north-east. Hodgson could give him no support, and could only tell him not to retire before dark.

At nightfall Cox's brigade (less the 1st Regiment, which had been ordered up to Es Salt) extended from Grant's right in the foot-hills, near the Umm esh Shert track, to the left of the 10th Regiment astride the track from Damieh; the 9th Regiment was facing north-west and north about Kefr

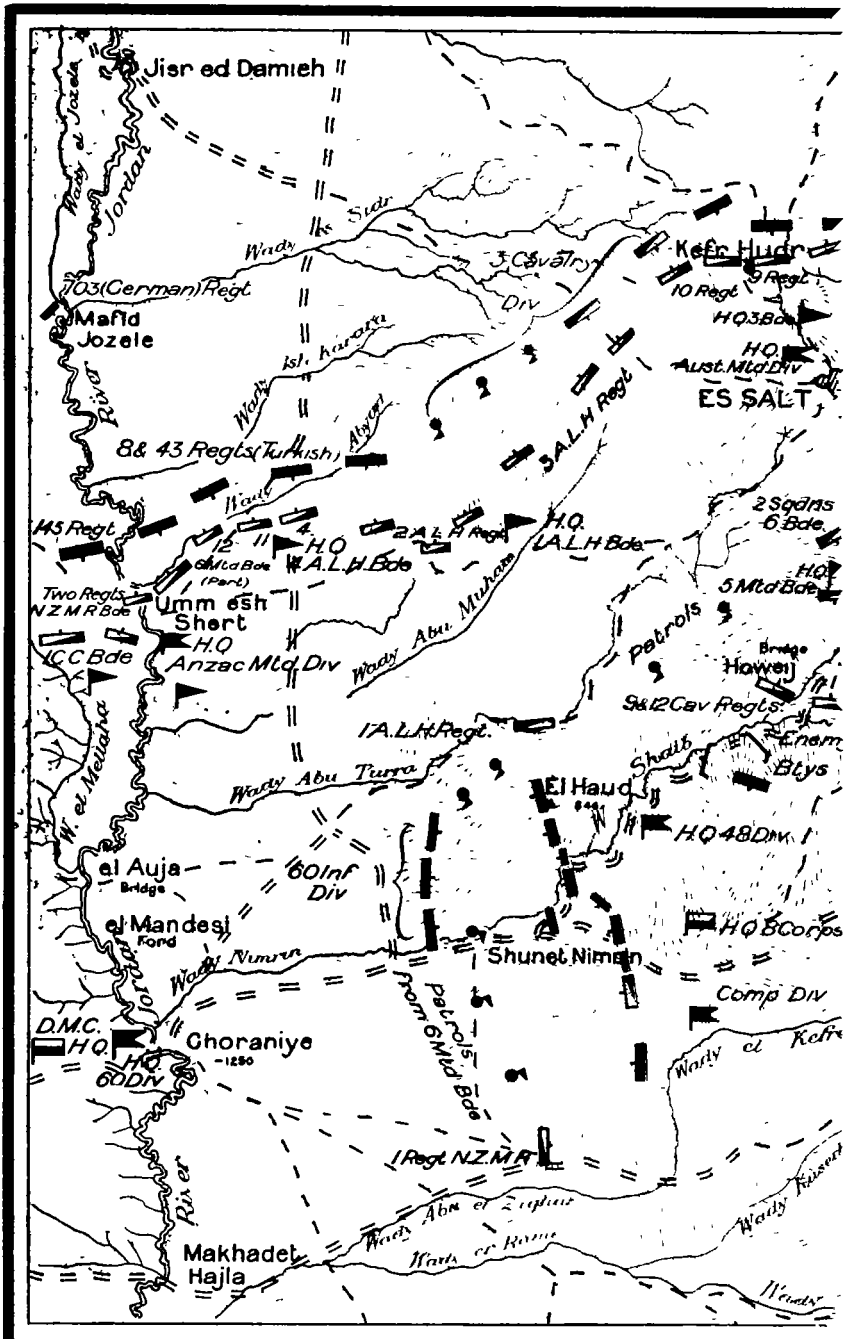
Hudr, and the line was carried round east of Es Salt by the 8th Regiment and a squadron of the 10th to the regiments of Ryrie's brigade. Ryrie's regiments were being pressed heavily by about 400 infantry and 200 cavalry, supported by four guns. It was now three days since the force had crossed the Jordan, and no supplies had reached the brigades. The track up from Umm esh Shert, although difficult, was not so formidable as the route followed in the rain by the Camel Brigade to Amman a month earlier. But, in consequence of



Es Salt-Shunet Nimrin road (showing where, in the subsequent fighting in September, 1918, it was blown up by the retreating Turks).

a blunder, it had been reported impossible for camels, and despite the urgency of the situation transport was not attempted. On the 2nd, therefore, orders were issued to the brigades to live on the country, and to the dismay of the natives their cattle and stores were taken in exchange for written orders on the British Government. Happily fat cattle were plentiful, and Es Salt contained considerable supplies of

MAP



Es Salt raid—Position just

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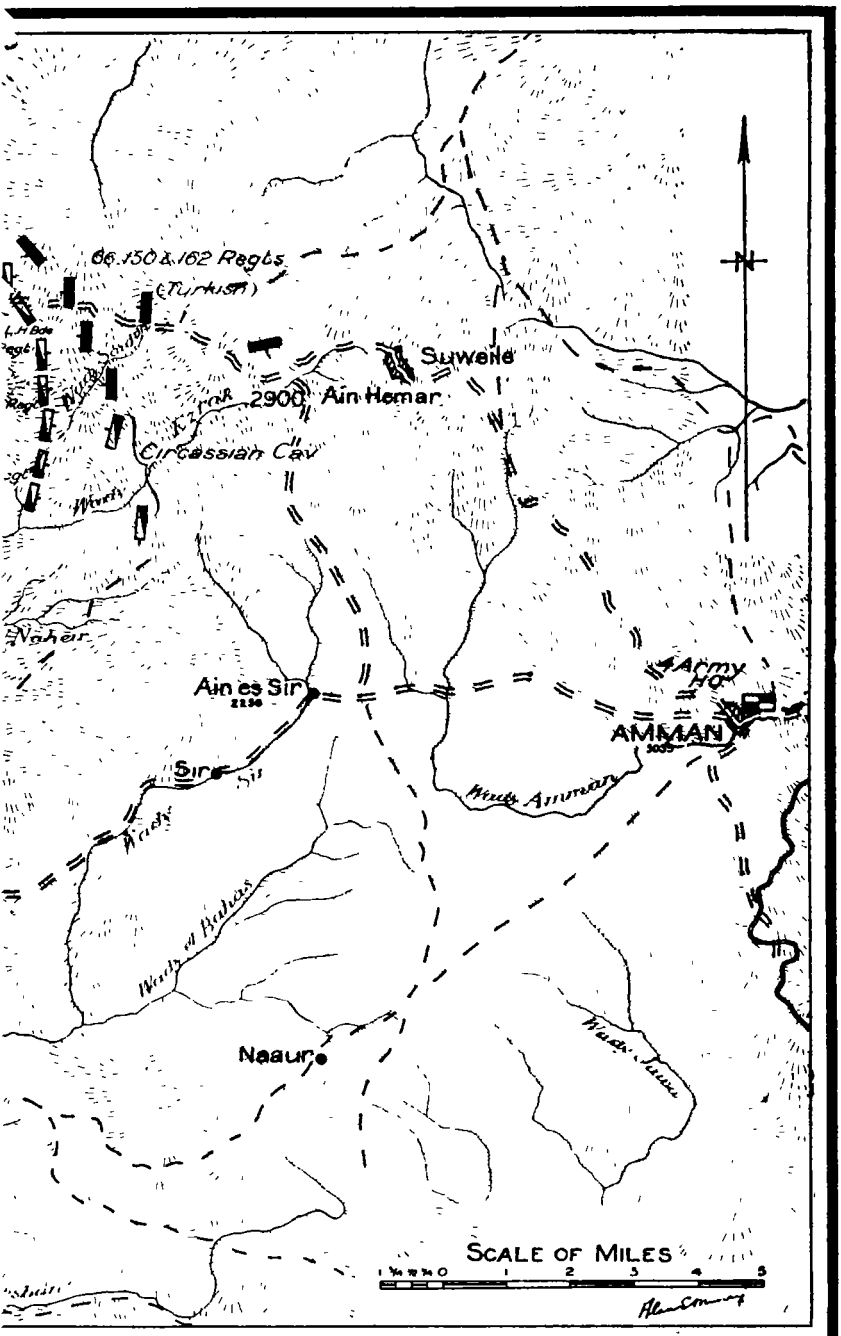

TO WITHDRAWAL, 2ND MAY, 1918.

grain, coarse flour, and raisins, so that all ranks were fed, while the horses found good grazing on the growing crops.

On the Amman side the night of the 2nd passed quietly; but at dawn an enemy force some hundreds strong endeavoured to storm a ridge, the right of which was held by the 5th Light Horse Regiment, and the left by two squadrons of the 8th under Major Shannon, with the squadron of the 10th in support. These Turks had crept forward on the previous day until they reached some dead ground within about 800 yards of the Australian line. Their rush at dawn fell chiefly on Shannon's sector. They pressed in strongly against Major Walker's squadron of the 8th on the left, but on the right a spirited counter-attack, led by Major P. H. Priestley,[3] forced them to take cover in a little depression, where they could not be reached by the Australian fire. In this fighting Priestley was killed. The Turks were now confined in a small salient, and enfilade fire, in which the 5th Regiment on the right strongly co-operated, cut off their escape. Walker then sent a troop by a détour towards their rear; when it was in position, he led his squadron in a frontal counter-attack, and at the same time a squadron of the 5th advanced from the right. The Turks, discovering that they were isolated, surrendered without fighting. Three hundred and nineteen prisoners, including a battalion commander and some Germans, were taken, and about 100 dead were counted on the ground. As usual, the light horse success was gained at very little expense; in the 8th Regiment Priestley and four men of other ranks were killed and nineteen other ranks wounded. During the morning Turkish reinforcements, including guns, could be seen advancing from Amman; but the failure in the early morning had steadied the enemy, and he made no further attack from the east during the day.

The next blow at the defensive ring of the light horsemen fell on the 9th Regiment at Kefr Hudr. Scott had two weak troops in posts on a ridge near the knoll; and soon after 9 a.m. on the 3rd one of these (Lieutenant Masson in command,

[3] Maj. P H. Priestley, 8th L.H. Regt. Dentist and farmer; of Blackwood, S. Aust; b Adelaide, S. Aust., 23 Dec, 1871. Killed in action, 3 May, 1918.

with Sergeant E. C. Smith,[4] Lance-Corporal J. R. Morrison,[5] and twelve men, with one Hotchkiss gun) was attacked by a strong party of enemy bombers. The little party fought doggedly until more than half the men had become casualties and the Hotchkiss gun had been blown to pieces by a hand-grenade. Bearing the wounded —except Sergeant Smith, who was too severely hit to be carried—the Australians then slowly retreated, while Morrison and one or two men held off the enemy. The loss of the position compelled a re-adjustment of the line which gave Kefr Hudr to the Turks, and all day they harassed Scott's line with heavy machine-gun fire from their high ground. The regiment was reinforced by a squadron of yeomanry, and arrangements were made for a counter-attack, but when the enemy obtained strong reinforcements this intention was abandoned. A force of about 3,000 Turks was seen advancing east over the hills from the direction of Damieh, and apparently assembling about a mile west of Kefr Hudr. A determined attempt to break through the light horse cordon by an assault on all sides seemed imminent. Hodgson had now used up all his reserves, and half the horse-holders were in the firing line, which left only one man in charge of every eight horses.

In the morning the Londoners, reinforced by their third brigade, had renewed their attack at Shunet Nimrin, but had again been beaten off; the yeomanry had been compelled to give up its effort to force the Howeij Bridge; and Chaytor's regiments, covering the Umm esh Shert track on the foot-hills and across the valley, were being persistently pressed by increasing numbers. It was plain to Chauvel that not only had the enterprise failed, but the offensive had definitely passed to the Turks, and unless the brigades on Gilead were speedily withdrawn the operation might end in disaster. The only supplies to arrive had been carried upon the previous day by a large donkey convoy, and everywhere ammunition was running low. Soon after 4 p.m. on May 3rd, Chauvel, with Allenby's concurrence, gave orders for a general withdrawal.

[4] Sgt. E. C Smith (No 2347; 9th L.H. Regt.). Bootmaker; of Rushworth, Vic ; b Rushworth, 1892. Died, 28 Aug., 1933.

[5] L/Cpl. J. R Morrison (No. 3241; 9th L.H. Regt). Grazier; of Teesdale, Vic.; b. Toorak, Melbourne, Vic , 1 Sept., 1893. (His brother, No. 3510 Pte. J. G. Morrison, was also with this party.)

At that time Allenby was at Chauvel's advanced-headquarters, about a mile west of Ghoraniye on the road to Jericho, keenly following the progress of the fight as it was revealed by wireless messages. Until the last moment he had refused to discuss failure; but then, recognising the danger of further persistence, he abruptly agreed to the withdrawal with the remark, "I can't lose half my mounted troops."

The Turkish attack upon Grant's brigade had been marked by sound staff work, and was carried out with great dash by all arms. The blow through the gap between the left flank and Red Hill had shown a shrewd grasp of the weakness of Hodgson's position upon Gilead. Had the Umm esh Shert track been won by the enemy, Chauvel's whole scheme must have at once collapsed. But the enemy High Command, having opened so brilliantly on the morning of the 1st, blundered immediately afterwards by dividing his Jordan valley force. Had he struck south with his full strength, instead of sending a large body up the range towards Es Salt, Grant must have been swept over the Umm esh Shert track, and Hodgson's brigades isolated. Even as it was, the troops under Chaytor's command had at times to fight desperately to hold their ground.

The enemy's main attacks fell upon Grant's regiments on the foot-hills. In advance of the Australian line was a prominent isolated hill, known during the fighting as "Table Top." This was exposed to enemy machine-gun fire, and was only lightly held by one troop of the 4th Regiment under Lieutenant W. J. Birkett-Vipont[6] and two troops of the 11th under Lieutenants L. A. Gordon[7] and P. McCowan.[8] On the afternoon of the 2nd the enemy heavily assaulted the position under effective covering fire. Twice the stormers reached within bombing distance of the Australians; each time the light horsemen advanced and met them with the bayonet in the open, and they were driven off, leaving about 100 dead and wounded on the slope. But the third rush was irresistible; the light horsemen were forced from their posts,

[6] Lieut W J. Birkett-Vipont, M M. 4th L.H. Regt. Farmer: of Apollo Bay, Vic.; b. Newport, Melb., Vic., 9 Jan., 1892.

[7] Capt. L. A. Gordon, 11th L.H. Regt Station overseer; b. Clare, S. Aust., 1891.

[8] Lieut P. McCowan, M.C.; 11th L.H. Regt. Farmer; of Mackay, Q'land; b. Perth, Scotland, 12 Apr., 1891.

and retreated slowly, bearing their wounded. The Australian machine-guns then came into play, and cut down the Turks in large numbers. One party of fifty was completely wiped out. This little enemy success denied a valuable spring of water to Grant's men, and afterwards the supply ran short and the troops suffered acutely in the intense heat. The whole Australian line was now under incessant machine-gun fire, with periods of heavy shelling; the Turks were also able to shell the lower stretches of the Shert track in the hills. "Black Hill," the dominating feature in the defensive line, was attacked by the enemy at 4 a.m. on the 3rd, under cover of a curtain of machine-gun fire. The Turks, who in this fighting wore steel helmets and advanced with fine daring, approached to within twenty yards of the light horse posts, when they were met by the Australians and swept down the hill with bombs and bayonet. All day the line was under intensive fire, but, except for an abortive attack on a post of the 4th Regiment after nightfall, the enemy was content to remain under cover.

Hodgson's withdrawal passed without complications. The light horsemen were now entering upon their fifth night without sleep, and were in a state of extreme exhaustion from fighting and climbing in the ranges. All round the circle the enemy was close to the Australian posts, confident of success, alert and aggressive. To break clean away was, in the circumstances, a movement which demanded the exercise of perfect discipline and cool and clever work by the individual men. The strain on the slender rear-guards, isolated in dark pockets of the ranges, was severe; but everywhere sufficient pressure was maintained to deceive the enemy and enable the main force to assemble and march unmolested down the mountain-side. As in the previous retreat from Gilead, extreme suffering was inflicted upon the wounded. The failure of transport, which handicapped all services, had brought about a shortage in medical supplies; but this was overcome by the handy airmen, who carried up parcels of chloroform, bandages, and other necessities, and dropped them close to Es Salt. During the afternoon every man who could sit on his horse was mounted and sent down the track. "I feel a bit shaky," said one who had to be helped back into the saddle, "but my old horse will carry me through." Blood

was dripping freely from bandages to his head as he rode off smiling and confident. Severe cases were loaded on the camel cacolets, and made a terrible descent in the darkness over a track which, it will be remembered, had been deemed too rough for camels with supplies. Many of the camels fell, and one bearing two wounded men rolled over many times down a steep hillside. In the search in the darkness only one of the men could be found; the other, who had had one of his arms amputated in the hospital at Es Salt, appeared at an ambulance station in the Jordan valley next morning, riding on a donkey. Only two men, supposed to be dying, were left in the hospital at Es Salt to fall into the hands of the Turks. One died, but the other, Corporal W. H. Simms,[9] of the 5th Light Horse Regiment, was found, almost well again, by Chauvel personally many months later in the Turkish hospital at Aleppo.

For the second time the abandonment of Es Salt produced a panic among the Christian inhabitants. These wretched victims of the war had accepted the smashing descent of Wilson's brigade as decisive, and had not concealed their feelings of delight. But as it became clear that the Australians were fighting on the defensive, they were moved once more to alarm and dismay. The clearing of the hospital on the afternoon of the 3rd was accepted as sure evidence of evacuation, and many enemy shells, bursting in the town, excited both Christians and Moslems to a state of frenzy. Already hundreds of families were loaded ready for flight, and by nightfall they were hastening with their beasts of burden down towards the valley. Over much of the journey the track was a hazardous goat-walk, and as it became occupied by the horsemen the lot of the fugitives moved every soldier to pity. Shouting to keep touch between families, and moaning and crying, they picked their painful way among the dark forms of the great horses. Many men, spent though they were, and with tempers on edge from overstrain and disappointment, dismounted and placed women and children in their saddles. "Never mind Allah," exclaimed an irritable light horseman to an old man who was beseeching a ride for his wife; "She's

[9] Cpl. W. H. Simms (No. 1379, 5th L H. Regt). Station manager; b. Indooroopilly, Q'land, 1891.

fallen off twice, and I'm tired of her. Why didn't you teach her to ride? However, up she goes for the last time."

With the 3rd Light Horse Brigade leading and the 7th Light Horse Regiment as rear-guard, the regiments passed down through the line held by the 2nd and 3rd Regiments; then the 2nd Regiment and the Canterburys covered the retirement through the foot-hills. The enemy discovered the withdrawal too late for effective action. The extreme rear-guard was heavily shelled about Es Salt, and the Turkish infantry pressed forward from the east, but was unable to get to close quarters. Before noon on the 4th all Hodgson's brigades were clear of the hills. This hurried movement, together with faulty co-operation, suddenly left Grant's right flank open, and the Turks moved swiftly to envelop it. Grant pushed out a few of his scouts, but these were at once driven back. As he was entirely without reserves, a little force of grooms and batmen was sent forward. These men were closely engaged by a force of Turks with bombs; but they hung on steadily until the position was made safe by the arrival of a force of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles, 1st Light Horse Regiment, and the Dorset Yeomanry. All day Grant's line was hotly punished, but that night the brigade was cleverly withdrawn without mishap. The Londoners at Shunet Nimrin had held the Turks there by a strong and successful demonstration while the rest of the troops were retreating from the hills; on the night of the 4th they, with Tooth's squadron of the 6th Light Horse as rear-guard, were withdrawn into the Ghoraniye bridgehead.

The British losses in the operation, although considerable, were not excessive. In the three brigades of Hodgson's Australian Division and the 1st and 2nd Light Horse Brigades, six officers were killed and 32 wounded, and of other ranks 44 were killed, 278 wounded, and 37 reported missing, nearly all of the latter being lost at Damieh. Shea's infantry casualties at Shunet Nimrin were 1,116 of all ranks. Upwards of 1,000 enemy prisoners were captured, of whom 666 were taken by the 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade and 300 by the infantry at Shunet Nimrin, while the enemy's casualties in killed and wounded probably exceeded 1,500. But, while the balance of casualties was perhaps in favour of the British,

the operation was from Allenby's standpoint an unqualified failure. It had been distinguished by many stirring isolated achievements, notably Wilson's swoop on Es Salt, but from the morning of the second day, when the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade was overthrown at Damieh, and it became clear that the infantry was safely held at Shunet Nimrin and that the Arabs were neutral, the outlook at all times favoured the Turks. The loss of the nine guns was a heavy blow to British prestige; and the whole operation, coming within a month of the failure at Amman, went far to revive the enemy's morale, which had been low after the drive from Gaza and the loss of Jerusalem. Nevertheless these two attempts on Gilead were destined to play an important, perhaps even a decisive, part in the subsequent campaign. The proved capacity of our mounted troops to raid at will the mountain fastnesses had a deep influence on the disposition of the Turkish forces. In papers captured afterwards at Nazareth it was shown that the enemy's High Command was shaken by the rapid and menacing movements east of Jordan, and was convinced that, when Allenby next engaged upon a general advance, he would strike up the valley and towards the east. A few months later he was enabled to exploit this fear to the full.

The Nazareth papers, and information obtained from a captured staff officer, also disclosed that the Turks fully expected the attack on the morning of April 30th, but did not anticipate that it would extend beyond Shunet Nimrin. From their observation posts on El Haud they had noted the British concentration about Jericho, and had even detected the movement towards the Ghoraniye bridge on the night of the 29th. But they had not given a thought to the audacious fling at their Fourth Army Headquarters under Djemal Pasha at Es Salt, and so took no precautions to block Grant's gallop to Jisr ed Damieh or Wilson's climb up the mountain. Their wireless during the fighting made generous reference to the work of the Australians. "Es Salt has been captured," they frankly announced, "by the reckless and dashing gallantry of the Australian cavalry." A German staff officer, who was in Es Salt, afterwards declared that in the rush upon the town

the men of the 8th Light Horse Regiment had galloped their horses in places where no one else would have ridden at all.

The documents captured at Nazareth also proved clearly that the misunderstandings and actual friction which weakened the enemy command in the days before the smashing of the Gaza-Beersheba line were still operating in Allenby's favour in May. Field-Marshal Liman von Sanders, the defender of Gallipoli, had, at Enver's urgent request, in February taken over the supreme command of the Turkish forces in Palestine in the dark days which followed the loss of Jerusalem, and Djemal Pasha had been given the command of the Fourth Turkish Army. In a telegram, dated May 4th, to Major von Papen, then chief of staff to Djemal's Fourth Army, von Sanders expressed strong dissatisfaction with the conduct of the operations east of Jordan. He condemned alike Djemal's failure to guard against the ride up the Jordan valley and the capture of Es Salt, and the steps afterwards taken for the counter-attacks upon the Australian brigades around the town. Von Sanders was at that time still in ignorance of the British evacuation of Gilead. "The enemy wishes," he said, "to create a strategical bridgehead whence he can advance later against Amman, Deraa, or Beisan; consequently it is necessary to retake Es Salt at all costs. . . . I would suggest that in such a position there should not be so much talk of losses and shortage of water. In severe fighting of this kind losses are inevitable. . . . It is we, as Prussian officers, who are charged with the duty of pushing forward with the greatest energy, satisfying complaints as far as possible, but otherwise insisting with an iron-like resolution on our wishes. . . . I have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that it is necessary to close the important roads at suitable places, or at least to prepare them for closing. But on April 30th at 7.30 a.m. the English were at Jisr ed Damieh with artillery and motors, and shortly before 11 a.m. a few squadrons had arrived opposite Es Salt." He also strongly disagreed with the withdrawal of the Fourth Army Headquarters northwards from Es Salt to a point out of close touch with the troops of the VIII Army Corps at Shunet Nimrin.

The papers further disclosed that the Turks had made elaborate plans for an attack upon Chauvel's forces in the

Jordan valley on May 4th. It was the concentration for this operation which brought so many troops about Damieh and Amman, whose presence had not been reported by the British Intelligence.

Both von Papen and Djemal replied, warmly resenting von Sanders' criticism. Von Papen pointed out that the Army Headquarters left Es Salt "one minute before the English forced their way in," and concluded his protest by asking to be relieved of his staff position and employed as a battalion commander "on a battle-front." Djemal contested von Sanders' complaints point by point; and the whole correspondence reveals that lack of discipline, reciprocal confidence, and good feeling which so often undermines the efficiency of a joint allied command. One sentence in Djemal's despatch is significant. Agreeing with von Sanders for once, "It is not improbable," he said, "that the enemy will shortly make a renewed attempt to capture the east Jordan region."